

SEPTEMBER 2023

EDUCATION // EXPOSURE // EXPERIENCE

# VA HOME LOAN PROGRAM



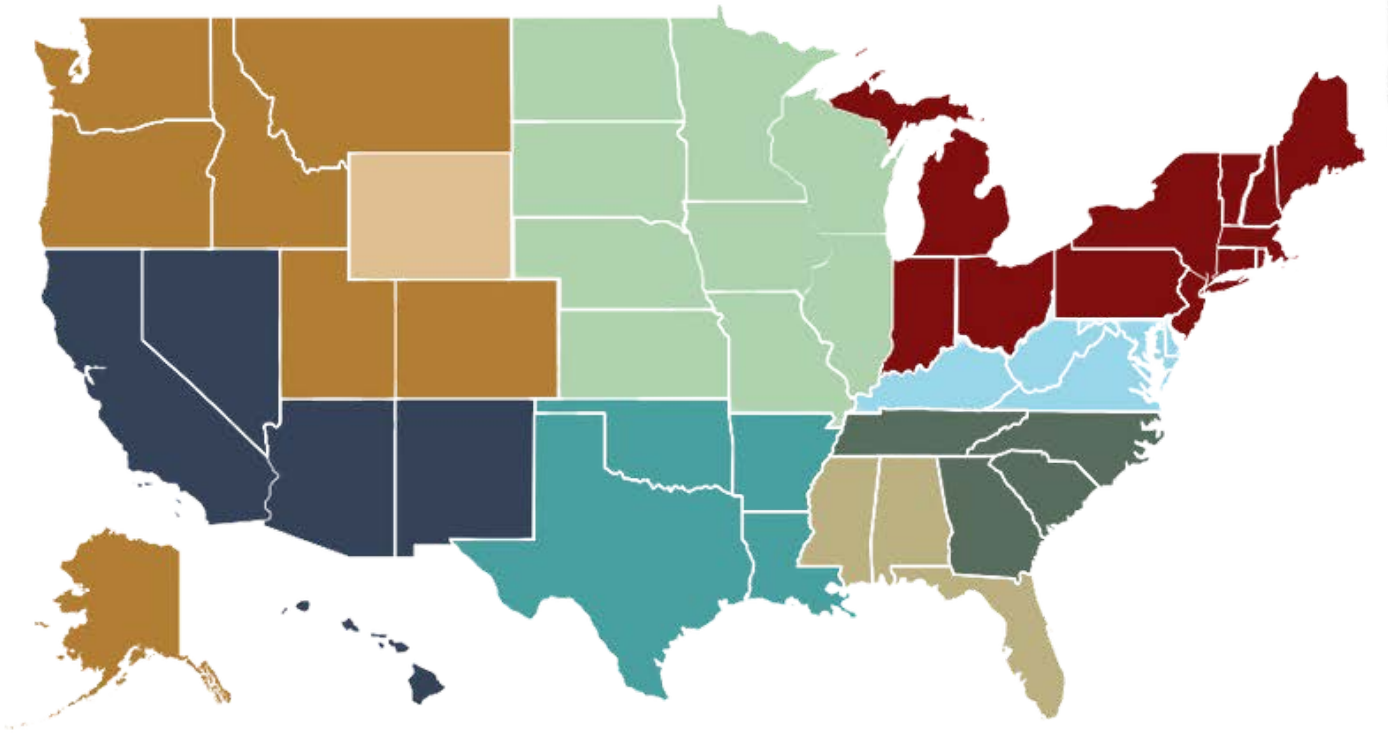
YOUR ULTIMATE VA LOAN RESOURCE GUIDE

Publication by Vetted VA™

# VETTED VA NETWORK

YOUR ULTIMATE VA LOAN RESOURCE

Visit our map on [www.vettedva.com](http://www.vettedva.com) to find a professional near you.



## Regional VA Loan Centers

- Denver, Colorado
- Phoenix, Arizona
- St. Paul, Minnesota
- Houston, Texas
- Cleveland, Ohio
- Roanoke, Virginia
- Atlanta, Georgia
- St. Petersburg, Florida

The Vetted VA network has over 100 full-time mortgage and real estate professionals across all 50 states. Our professionals go through a rigorous training and leadership development process to better serve their communities, professional organizations and Veterans, and they train hard. The Vetted VA members community is 71,000 strong and growing every day. We host two social media groups, one where Veterans can freely ask questions about mortgage loans and real estate in a pressure free, solicitation free environment that is highly monitored to maintain the utmost professionalism. Our second group is for all professionals where we offer knowledge and support on mortgage and real estate industry topics. We've helped thousands of Veterans and professionals navigate the VA loan process successfully. Join our communities to elevate your VA loan knowledge and experience the benefit and pride in supporting our nation's heroes and their families.

**100+**

Active-Duty  
Vetted VA  
Professionals

**71.6K**

Community Members  
Veterans, active  
duty and family  
members

**5.1K**

Mortgage and  
Real Estate  
Community  
Members

**100+**

Hours of  
Education  
and Training  
Content

**24/7**

Community  
Support

Visit the [vettedva.com](http://vettedva.com) website to locate a professional nearest you.

# VA HOME LOAN PROGRAM

YOUR ULTIMATE VA LOAN RESOURCE GUIDE

SEPTEMBER 2023



## A NEW STANDARD OF SERVICE AND INTEGRITY

by Vetted VA

We believe that Veterans deserve access to accurate information about their earned VA loan benefit. We pride ourselves in continually educating, familiarizing, and providing experiences for mortgage industry professionals to better connect and serve the Veteran community. Our team is dedicated to using data to influence national policy while providing Veterans with a best-in-class national support system. We are an education and training company and are proud to bring you our ultimate resource guide on the VA loan.

Vetted VA is a network of dedicated professionals across the country that are educated, trained, and ready to meet all your VA loan needs.

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# VA LOAN ELIGIBILITY

## THIS EDITION

What you need to know about the VA home loan benefit.

**TRUST BUT VERIFY**



## CURRENTLY SERVING ?

90 Day Rule for active service members. If you've served for at least 90 consecutive days (all at once, without a break in service), you meet the minimum active-duty service requirement for VA home loan eligibility.

## STATEMENT OF SERVICE

Currently serving members will need to provide a statement of service signed by leadership or unit personnel office that states full name, SSN, entry date on active duty, and a POC.

## ARE YOU A SURVIVING SPOUSE?

You may be able eligible if at least one of these apply:

- the Veteran is missing in action or is a Prisoner of War (POW)
- the Veteran died while in service or from a service-connected disability
- the Veteran died while in service or from a service-connected disability and you did not remarry before age 57 or before 16 Dec 03
- the Veteran was totally disabled and then died but their disability may not have been the cause of death

## AM I ELIGIBLE FOR A VA HOME LOAN?

VA categorizes eligibility into four groups: Active service members, Veterans (previously served), National Guard members and Reserve members.

### SERVED 2 AUG 1990 TO PRESENT

- served at least 24 consecutive months, or
- full period (at least 90 days) for which you were ordered to Active Duty, or
- at least 90 days if discharged for hardship or reduction in force, or
- less than 90 days if discharged for service connected disability

### NATIONAL GUARDSMEN

- served for at least 90 days between 2 Aug 1990 and present
- at least 90 days of non ADT, or 90 days of AD service of which at least 30 consecutive days on orders, or
- six creditable years in the NG and discharged honorably or placed on retired list

### SERVED 8 SEP 1980 TO 1 AUG 1990

- served at least 24 consecutive months, or
- served full period (at least 181 days) of which you were ordered to active duty, or
- at least 181 days if you were discharged for a hardship, or reduction in force, or
- served less than 181 days if discharged for a service-connected disability.
- if an officer, service dates between 17 Oct 1981 to 1 Aug 1990 apply

### RESERVISTS

- served for at least 90 days active duty time between 2 Aug 1990 and present
- at least 90 days of non-training active-duty service, or
- six creditable years in Selected Reserve and at least one of these must be true:
- discharged honorably, placed on the retired list, or transferred to Standby Reserve or other Ready Reserve element after service characterized as honorable, or continue to serve in Selected Reserve

### SERVED 8 MAY 1975 TO 7 SEP 1980

- served 181 continuous days, or
- less than 181 days if discharged for a service connected disability

# WHAT IF I DON'T MEET THE MINIMUM SERVICE REQUIREMENTS?

You may still be eligible for VA home loan benefits if you were discharged from service for one of the following reasons:

- hardship
- convenience of the government (must have served at least 20 months of a 2-year enlistment)
- early out (must have served 21 months of a 2-year enlistment)
- reduction in force (RIF)
- certain medical conditions or a service-connected disability



## CHARACTERIZATION OF SERVICE

Veterans that meet the minimum service requirements and have the following characterizations of service on their DD214 or equivalent form are eligible for a VA home loan: Honorable, General under Honorable and in some cases Other than Honorable discharges.

### HONORABLE

**Eligible.** Eligible to participate in the VA loan program, this characterization indicates member faithfully executed the mission and performed duties well.

### GENERAL UNDER HONORABLE

**Eligible.** Eligible to participate in the VA loan program, this characterization indicates member faithfully executed the mission and met most performance and conduct requirements.

### OTHER THAN HONORABLE

**Depends.** Eligibility may depend on the reason for the discharge. This characterization indicates the Veteran was released from duty under administrative discharge.

### BAD CONDUCT

**Depends.** If you were discharged as a result of a court-martial. General court-martialed service members are not recognized as Veterans per VA. Special court-martials may be eligible, contact VA RLC.

### DISHONORABLE

**Not Eligible.** If you have a dishonorable discharge, the most punitive punishment, you are not eligible to participate in the VA loan program.

### ENTRY LEVEL OR NONCHARACTERIZED

**Not Eligible.** Not considered a Veteran and not eligible to participate in the program.



## CHARACTERIZATION OF SERVICE (COS)

Veterans that meet the minimum service requirements and have the following characterizations of service on their DD214 or equivalent form are eligible for a VA home loan: Honorable, General under Honorable and in some cases Other than Honorable discharges.

## WHAT IF YOUR SERVICE CHARACTERIZATION IS INCORRECT?

Veterans that believe their characterization of service is incorrect should formally request a Discharge Review Board (DRB) through their service branch. Any service member separated on or after 20 Dec 2019, that has exhausted all available appeals may apply to the Discharge Appeals Review Board (DARB), a new board of appeals with provision for personal appearances. Consider using a Veterans' advocate at your nearest Veteran Service Organization (VSO) to help you in the process.

## QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR ELIGIBILITY?

You can call the VA Regional Loan Center at 877-827-3702, Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. EST.



# VA LOAN ENTITLEMENT

## WHAT IS THE CERTIFICATE OF ELIGIBILITY?

The certificate of eligibility (COE) is a VA form that lenders use to determine if a Veteran has met the VA's military service requirement. The COE indicates whether or not a Veteran has previously used a VA loan, and is used to calculate the Veteran's VA loan entitlement.

## HOW DO I GET A COPY OF A COE?

- Complete the online VA Form 26-1880 request at [www.eBenefits.va.gov](http://www.eBenefits.va.gov)
- Mail in the completed VA Form 26-1880 along with proof of Military Service to  
VA Loan Eligibility Center  
P.O. Box 100023  
Decatur, GA 30031
- Contact the Vetted VA Professional in your area by visiting the Vetted VA at [www.vettedva.com](http://www.vettedva.com)

## WHAT IS VA ENTITLEMENT?

Your VA loan entitlement is the dollar figure the VA guarantees to a lender. If you have never used a VA loan, you are eligible for full VA loan entitlement and do not have a loan limit. This means the VA will guarantee to your lender that if you default on a loan over \$144,000 the VA will pay them up to 25% of the loan amount. With VA full entitlement you are also not required to make a down payment on your home loan.

If you have used a VA loan before, your COE will indicate the amount used and you can calculate the amount remaining by using the following formula:

**Entitlement Charged x4 = X; Conforming Loan Limit - X= Amount you can borrow without a down payment**

The amount shown in the Entitlement Charged column on your COE is multiplied by 4. Subtract that amount from the county's 2023 conforming loan limit to determine how much you can borrow without needing a down payment. Contact your lender for more details.

## ARE YOU A SURVIVING SPOUSE?

If you are receiving DIC benefits, you can complete the VA Form 26-1817, Request for Determination of Loan Guaranty Eligibility- Unmarried Surviving Spouse. You'll need the Veteran's DD214 or equivalent.

If you are not receiving DIC benefits, you can fill out an application for DIC, Survivors Pension and/or Accrued Benefits, VA Form 21P-43EZ.

- You'll need the Veteran's DD214 or equivalent and,
- A copy of your marriage license
- Veteran's death certificate

## OTHER CATEGORIES

You may be able to get a COE if you meet at least one of these requirements: U.S. citizen who served in Armed Forces of a government allied with the U.S. in WWII, or served as a member in certain organizations i.e., Public Health or Cadet at the military academy.

## CONFORMING LOAN LIMIT

The conforming loan limit is \$726,200 for a single-family residence in most U.S. counties. For high-cost counties the limit is \$1,089,300. Conforming loan limits may change annually. You can check your county's loan limit by visiting [www.fhfa.gov](http://www.fhfa.gov).



Members of the VVA Professionals Network at Annual Vetted VA Summer Camp, 2022



# VA LOAN KEY BENEFITS

## NO DOWN PAYMENT REQUIRED

No down payment is required with full VA entitlement. Conventional loan products typically require at least 3% down with anything less than 20% requiring private mortgage insurance. FHA loans require at least a 3.5% down payment.

## NO LOAN LIMIT WITH QUALIFYING ENTITLEMENT

That's right! No loan limit for Veterans with full entitlement. Your lender will qualify you based on income, credit and assets.

## COMPETITIVE TERMS & INTEREST RATES

VA loan interest rates are often lower than market average. This can save you thousands of dollars over the course of your loan. Working with a vetted mortgage professional can help you compare interest rates among different lenders.



## WHY YOU SHOULD USE YOUR HARD EARNED BENEFIT

### FEWER CLOSING COSTS AND NO PMI REQUIRED

- VA loans protect Veteran interests and place restrictions on fees lenders can charge borrowers
- Private mortgage insurance is not required
- VA allows sellers to pay up to 4% concessions plus closing costs of the loan amount as seller-paid costs, saving you money

### FLEXIBLE UNDERWRITING GUIDELINES

- There is no minimum credit score required
- Lenders may qualify you with a FICO score of at least 620, some lenders accept scores of at least 500
- Qualifying for a VA loan isn't solely based on FICO score, but debt to income ratio (DTI) and residual income requirements.

### VARIETY OF LOAN OPTIONS

- Standard purchase loan
- Interest Rate Reduction Refinance loan
- Cash-out Refinance loan
- VA One-time close construction loan
- VA Loan Assumptions
- Energy Efficiency Mortgages
- Native American Direct Loan (NADL) program

The benefits of using your VA loan outshine other mortgage loan products by far. A VA loan provides an opportunity and pathway for Veterans of all types to become homeowners. It is a benefit you've earned sacrificing your life for your country. While VA provides the guidelines for a VA loan, each lender may have varying standards for loan approval. Join the Vetted VA Facebook group and have your questions answered directly by our professional and trained network of mortgage and realty industry experts.

# VA FUNDING FEE

The Funding Fee is a one-time payment added to most VA mortgages to offset the costs of the VA home loan program for all eligible Veterans.

## YOU WON'T PAY A FUNDING FEE IF

- You are a Veteran receiving VA compensation for service-connected disabilities
- You are a Veteran entitled to VA compensation for a service-connected disability but receive retirement pay or active duty pay instead
- You are receiving Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) as the surviving spouse of a Veteran
- You have a proposed memorandum rating before the loan closing date that states you are eligible to receive compensation due to a pre-discharge claim
- You are an active duty service member that has received the Purple Heart medal

## FUNDING FEE RATES

Your funding fee rate will depend on the type of loan you are receiving, the total amount of your loan, and your down payment (if applicable). The funding fee is calculated from the percentage of your total loan amount.

	IF YOUR DOWN PAYMENT IS...	YOUR FUNDING FEE IS...
<b>FIRST TIME USE</b>	Less than 5%	2.15%
	5% or more	1.5%
	10% or more	1.25%
<b>SUBSEQUENT USE</b>	Less than 5%	3.3%
	5% or more	1.5%
	10% or more	1.25%

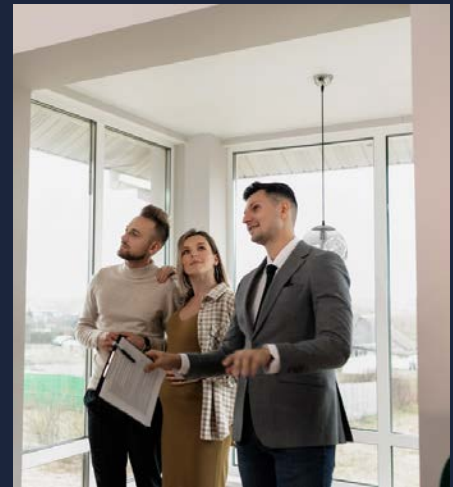
\*For VA-backed cash-out refinance loans, the rates are 2.15% on or for first-time use and 3.3%. For NADL participants the funding fee for a purchase is 1.25% and 0.5% for a loan refinance.

You should know that if you roll the funding fee and other costs into your loan, it could lead to you owing more money than the fair market value of the property. This could reduce the benefit of refinancing in the future since your payment wouldn't be as low as you may have wanted. It could also potentially make it harder for you to get enough money out of the future sale of the home to pay off your loan balance. Your lender will advise if this is a concern for you.



## HOW DO I PAY THE FUNDING FEE?

The funding fee may be rolled into your loan and paid off over time or the fee can be paid in full at closing. Did you know the funding fee can be paid by the seller, lender, or any other party on your behalf?



## FUNDING FEE REFUND

You may be eligible for a refund if you are later rewarded VA compensation for a service-connected disability. The effective date of award must be retroactive to before the date of your loan closing.

## FUNDING FEE FOR OTHER LOAN TYPES

- Interest Rate Reduction Refinancing Loan - 0.5%
- Manufactured home loans (not permanent) - 1%
- VA loan assumptions - 0.5%
- Vendee loan (purchasing VA acquired property) - 2.25%



# COMMON MISTAKES VETERANS MAKE

The path to homeownership is an extensive one but it can be made easier by preparing yourself for the process and vetting your mortgage team. Here are some top mistakes Veterans may make:

## NOT REVIEWING YOUR CREDIT OR TAKING ANY CORRECTIVE ACTIONS

A 620 FICO score is what most lenders prefer, but every situation is different. Some VA lenders accept as low as a 500 FICO score. VA lenders can look at other compensating factors to qualify you for a loan. It helps to review your credit report and take corrective actions on negative indicators prior to applying for pre-approval. Lenders care about your score, but they also care about how you are managing your credit and finances. You don't need perfect credit; you need a plan! Your credit profile matters most!

## NOT GETTING A PREAPPROVAL FOR A VA LOAN

It's important to have your preapproval in hand before you start your home shopping. Realtors and sellers want to know that you have a lender that has pre-qualified you for a home loan. It shows you can be taken seriously and can help narrow down the scope of your house-hunting when teaming with your realtor.

## DISRUPTING YOUR LOAN PREAPPROVAL PROCESS

The last thing you want to do once you've received loan preapproval is to have a change in your credit or financial status. Actions like taking out a new car loan, quitting your job, or financing furniture will cause your lender to reevaluate your credit and finances and disrupt the loan approval process. If your lender does not advise you against these types of actions, they do not have your best interest at heart.

## NOT HAVING A FINANCIAL HOME BUYING PLAN

VA lenders use the VA residual income charts to assess whether or not a Veteran will have enough funds remaining after mortgage payments and other financial obligations to live without hardship. During the home loan process, Veterans must prepare for the knowns, unknowns, and unknown unknowns. Having a reserve fund can help ease the stress and anxiety that can come with unexpected charges and help you avoid backing out of a sales contract.

## BLURRING THE LINES ON VA LOAN GUIDELINES

VA loan program benefits are to be used for a Veteran's primary residence only. Eligible Veterans can be approved for loans to buy a multi-unit property if they would like to use their VA loan to invest in real estate. Lenders may have specific restrictions along with VA guidelines as far as occupancy and timelines before a Veteran can refinance or sell a property. Always check with your lender and read your loan disclosures carefully.

## NOT SHOPPING AROUND & VETTING YOUR MORTGAGE TEAM

Homeownership is a commitment and for many Americans, property ownership makes up the bulk of their living expense. Why would you not research your mortgage and realtor team? Don't be fooled by snazzy ads or clickbait. At Vетted VA our slogan is "Trust but Verify". Verify your lenders and realtors. Education, Exposure, and Experience are our key tenants; we encourage all Veterans to do their research before signing the dotted line. Join our Vетted VA Facebook community and observe and learn; you can join for free!



## INCOME

You'll need to have steady, reliable and verified income to qualify for a VA loan. Abrupt changes in employment may cause issues in your loan approval process.

## FINANCIAL PREP

Fees like home appraisal, inspections, etc. can be expenses that you must pay upfront. Discuss with your lender and have those amounts plus set aside.

## CREDIT PREP

Vетted VA has partnered with FINLOCKER to bring Veterans the Vетted VA Go Bag, an all-in-one tool to prepare you for home ownership. View and monitor your credit report, search for real estate, add your docs for VA loan underwriting, receive updates on your property, and more. For free and with zero ads or solicitations. Visit [www.ветtedva/ветtedgobag](http://www.ветtedva/ветtedgobag) for more.

Vетted VA also has a Credit Bootcamp: Mastering Credit Basics course free for Veterans and their family members. Join the Vетted VA Facebook group to sign up.

## VA LENDING EDUCATION

Want to learn more on your own about VA lending and build your homeownership game plan? Check out Vетted VA on YouTube and view our VA Lending topic line up, with quick-hitting information and education brought to you by our Vетted VA professionals.

# VA LOAN PROTECTIONS



## VA "PROTECTION CLAUSE"

A VA protection clause must be contained in the sales contract for all VA-guaranteed loans. This clause states that you have the right not to purchase a home when the appraisal's Notice of Value (NOV) is below the sales contract price. Your lender is responsible for ensuring the clause is in the sales contract prior to your closing.

## VA APPRAISALS

VA appraisals are not the same as home inspections, and you should have both when purchasing your property, even if it is a brand-new build. VA protects Veterans by ensuring they purchase safe, sanitary, and structurally sound properties. Once the VA appraisal is complete, the Veteran will receive the notice of value (NOV) stating the property's estimated value and, if applicable, a list of items requiring repair to meet the VA's minimum property requirements.

## WHAT IF THE APPRAISAL COMES IN BELOW SALES PRICE?

### TIDEWATER PROCESS

During the appraisal process, fee appraisers are required to notify the requester before completing the appraisal when it appears the estimated value is lower than sale price. This provides an opportunity for the requestor to send additional data to support the sale prices.

### RECONSIDERATION OF VALUE (ROV)

After the NOV has been issued, if the price remains unchanged the Veteran may request an ROV. The Staff Appraisal Review (SAR) will research market data and provide a recommendation. This is a second opportunity to provide additional market data.

### ESCAPE CLAUSE / CONTINGENCY

You have the right to not purchase a home when the appraisal's Notice of Value (NOV) is below sales contract price. You should also have other contingencies such as the satisfactory home inspection contingency. Your vetted Real Estate agent can advise.

### RENEGOTIATION/ CASH TO CLOSING

The seller may be willing to consider reducing the sale price to the VA appraised value or offer seller concessions. If the seller is unwilling to negotiate a reduced price, you have the option to pay the difference in value in cash at closing.

\*No other mortgage products that have built-in value reconsideration options for Veterans. Teaming with a vetted professional can help prepare you for the options above. \*For new construction homes, you can request a "cost approach" appraisal. This applies when you are building a home in a newly developed area where there are no comparable properties to estimate your home's value.

## PROPERTY INSPECTIONS

Home inspections are not required by VA but may be required by your lender. A home inspection is conducted by a state-licensed home inspector that observes and provides a report on major home systems and components of the property like the heating and cooling systems, plumbing, electrical and structural components. The inspector will provide the buyer with a list of items of concern. The repair costs can be negotiated between the seller and the buyer. Your lender and real estate agent will advise on the entire process to get you to a successful closing.

# VA LOAN MISCONCEPTIONS

LET'S CLEAR SOME THINGS UP



## VA LOANS ARE DENIED AT A HIGHER RATE (RISK)

**False.** VA loans have the lowest denial rate (7.25%) compared to Conventional (11.2%) and FHA loans (11.8%) according to '22 study by our partners at Polygon Research using Home Mortgage Disclosure Act (HMDA).

## VA LOANS ARE TOO EXPENSIVE FOR VETERANS

**False.** VA regulations limit the fees a Veteran pay to obtain a loan. A comparative analysis by Polygon Research showed average net charges and credits at \$2,467 of 368,526 total loans compared to \$2,529 for conventional and \$3,204 for FHA loans.

## NO DOWN PAYMENT EQUALS WEAK FINANCIAL STATUS

**False.** There is no data to support this misconception. The ability to obtain a home loan with zero down payment is an earned benefit granted to Veterans for their service.

## FHA OR CONVENTIONAL LOANS ARE BETTER

**False.** This depends on each individual borrower. VA benefits such as no down payment requirement, no private mortgage insurance, interest rates at 0.5% to 1% lower, and fewer closing costs will beat an FHA or conventional loan every time.

## VA APPRAISALS ARE SLOW AND RESULT IN LOW VALUE

**False.** The reality is that this can occur with any mortgage product, the VA loan is the only loan product that has two options that other loan products don't offer: Tidewater and ROV. These provide opportunities for buyers and sellers to justify the sales price.

## SELLERS MUST PAY ALL CLOSING COSTS

**False.** Both Veterans and sellers are capped at the expenses that they can pay towards closing costs with sellers capped at 4% in seller's concessions. The only fee Veterans cannot pay are brokerage fees and realtor commissions.



The benefits of using your VA loan outshine other comparative mortgage loan products by providing an opportunity for all types of Veterans to gain home ownership and is a benefit you earned sacrificing for your country. Every lender will have varying standards (lender overlays) for VA loan approval; be sure to reach out. Join the Vetted VA Facebook Group and have your questions answered directly by our professional network of mortgage and realty industry experts.



## VETERAN SELLERS

### **Seller's Closing Costs:**

- Commission for real estate professionals
- Buyer broker fee

The seller cannot pay more than 4% of the total loan in concessions. This applies to closing costs and VA funding fees but does not apply to loan discount points.

Selling to a fellow Veteran using their VA loan? Prepare your home for sale by reviewing the VA's Minimum Property Requirements (MPR) for your area. A home that meets the VA minimum MPR is more likely to go through the appraisal and inspection process with ease.

In the event an appraisal amount comes in lower than your asking price, did you know the VA has two rebuttal options for Veteran buyers?

Make sure your selling agent is aware of these options: the VA's Tidewater process and Reconsideration of Value (see p.7). This is a great opportunity to provide an appraiser with additional support information backing your asking price.



VVA Leadership Team at AIME FUSE, Las Vegas 2022

## VETERAN BUYERS

### **Buyer's Closing Costs:**

- VA funding fee (if applicable)
- Loan origination fee
- Loan discount points or funds for temporary 'buydowns' (if applicable)
- Credit report and payment of any credit balances or judgments
- VA appraisal fee
- Hazard insurance and real estate taxes
- State and local taxes
- Title insurance
- Recording fee

Closing costs cannot be financed into a standard purchase loan with the exception of the VA funding fee. Your closing costs can be negotiated with the seller, and any interested party can pay your fees on your behalf. VA only specifies that a Veteran buyer cannot pay for any brokerage commission or realtor fees.

Your interest rate, discount points (fees you pay to your lender at closing to lower your interest rate), and other closing costs will determine your overall costs for the loan. Your lender will best be able to provide you with a breakdown.

### **Did you know you can use your VA loan benefit for the following types of property?**

Condominium, build a new home, build a new home on purchased land, build a new home on land you already own, simultaneously purchase and improve a home, make energy-efficient upgrades to your home, purchase a manufactured home and/or lot, purchase a farm residence and many more options with the VA loan program.

Reach out to a VVA professional in your state if you have questions about your VA loan. Visit [www.vettedva.com](http://www.vettedva.com).



# ARE YOU READY TO BUY?

There are five basic steps in the VA home loan application process. What's important to us is that you are 1) eligible and ready to make the big purchase 2) you have vetted your team.

## STEP 1. SELECT A LENDER

A VA loan experienced lender can help you review your financial situation and credit history. The lender will request your COE from the VA and closely review your eligibility and VA entitlement. Be prepared to send all documentation requested for your application such as bank statements, tax returns, VA disability letters, etc.

## STEP 2. SELECT A REALTOR

Steps 1 and 2 are usually done simultaneously. You want to make sure you are vetting your team and that they are knowledgeable and have experience working with Veterans and processing VA loans. Your VA-experienced realtor can help guide you in finding homes that not only meet your needs but adhere to the VA's minimum property requirements and understand the VA appraisal process. They should advise you on VA protections and clauses to make sure you are well-informed and protected throughout the real estate transaction.

## STEP 3. SELECT A PROPERTY

Select a home and discuss the purchase with the selling agent through your realtor. Make sure your realtor has market research available to support the seller's asking price and that everything you want is in the contract before you sign. Signing a purchase contract is your agreement that you will purchase the home, read it carefully.

## STEP 4. SUBMIT THE APPLICATION TO YOUR LENDER

The lender will process the required loan documentation and develop all credit and income information. They will also request VA to assign a licensed VA appraiser to determine the reasonable value of the property. You'll want to monitor this process and remain available for any updates. A Certificate of Reasonable Value will be issued.

## STEP 5. UNDERWRITING AND CLOSING

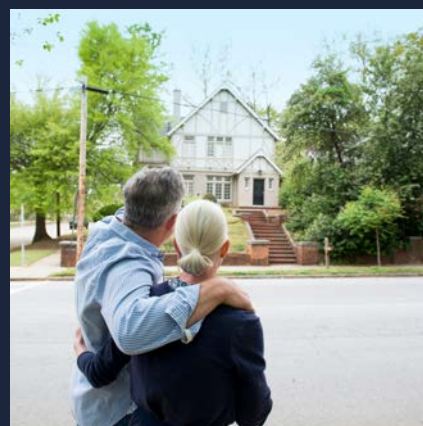
The lender will let you know the decision on the loan. You should have no problems being approved if the established value of the property and your credit and income are acceptable and don't change during the underwriting process. You will attend the loan closing. The lender or closing attorney will explain the loan terms and requirements as well as where and how to make the monthly payments. Sign the note, mortgage, and other related papers.

## HAVE YOU VETTED YOUR LENDER?

Check out our discussions on how to find a professional that will serve you well?

Vetted VA has video library with a full range of VA loan topics on YouTube.

Check out the channel [www.youtube.com/@vettedva](http://www.youtube.com/@vettedva)



## WHAT IS A CLOSING DISCLOSURE?

A closing disclosure is a document that provides the final details about your loan. It includes the terms, projected monthly payments and how much in fees you will pay in closing. Lenders are required to provide this to you at least 3 business days before your closing. Want to know exactly what to look for? Visit [www.consumerfinance.gov](http://www.consumerfinance.gov)



# VA LOAN CLOSING COSTS

## FEES ALLOWED TO BE PAID BY VETERAN BORROWERS

Let's take a closer look at VA loan closing costs.

- Lender's 1% flat charge (plus reasonable discount points for a lower interest rate). The 1% fee (loan origination fee) includes items that cannot be charged to the Veteran as an "itemized fee or charge"
- Appraisal fees - for a single-family property can range from \$550 - \$1300 depending on the state/county of purchase. VA fee charts can be found at <https://benefits.va.gov/benefits>, Home Loans, Appraisers/SAR, Appraisal Fee Schedules and Timeliness Requirements
- Compliance inspections - fees can range from \$300-\$500 and vary by location and size of the property
- Recording fees - are charges by state and local agencies for resisting a property's transfer of ownership. Fees will vary based on county. On average, buyers will pay \$100-\$150.
- Credit report fee - a lender can charge up to \$65 to get a copy of your credit report. This is not a standard report but one focused on mortgage credit worthiness.
- Prepaid items - include prorated property taxes, insurance, and any initial escrow deposits. Fees can vary.
- Insurance - annual homeowner's insurance varies by location and coverage, most homeowners will typically pay roughly .035% of the home's value. Your lender and realtor can advise you on insurance companies.
- VA flood certification - this certificate helps to determine how much you'll need to pay for flood insurance, and costs depend on property type and location but can range from \$170 to \$2K or more.
- Title examination insurance - is a one-time fee insurance policy that protects against property title defects such as forgery, fraud, undue influence, and administrative errors. This fee can range from \$500 to \$3000 and will vary by location and purchase price.
- Lot Survey fee - Most commonly done on lots in a subdivision and includes boundary lines, flood plains, septic tank locations, etc. This fee can range between \$50 and \$500 per acre, depending directly on lot size, characteristics, and how many property corners need to be identified.
- VA funding fee - the funding fee rate will depend on the type of loan you are receiving, the total amount of your loan, and your down payment (if applicable). The funding fee is calculated from the percentage of your total loan amount. See p. 9 for more.

## WHAT CAN I EXPECT TO PAY UPFRONT?

You can expect to pay an earnest money deposit (EMD), and any appraisal and inspection fees. Your vetted realtor can best advise you.



## TROUBLE MAKING PAYMENTS?

If you are facing difficulty in making your mortgage payments, the VA can help you by providing free financial counseling even if your loan isn't a VA direct or VA backed loan. If your VA loan is at least 61 days past due, the VA will automatically assign a VA loan technician to assist you.

Your first line of assistance should be your lender. If you're nervous about making that call, the VA can help. Call 877-827-3702 or email [LGYLANational.VBACO@va.gov](mailto:LGYLANational.VBACO@va.gov)



# VA LOAN FAQs

## ARE VA LOANS DIFFICULT TO QUALIFY FOR?

No. The VA loan program has flexible credit and underwriting standards. Since the VA does not have a credit score or DTI requirement, it's up to lenders to decide if they want to approve your loan application. Most lenders prefer Veterans with at least a 600-620 FICO score, but there are many that can approve your loan if your score is lower. Approved VA lenders are concerned with "how" you manage your finances and credit, not merely just the snapshot of your score. The VA also supports lenders in using other compensating factors to approve your loans, such as the amount of residual income and personal assets. Your credit profile matters.

## CAN I USE MY VA LOAN TO PURCHASE AN INVESTMENT PROPERTY?

No. Your VA loan must be used for your primary residence only. You can, however, purchase a multi-unit property and occupy one of the units and rent the others. Your primary residence can be occupied by yourself or your spouse or dependent children to meet the VA's occupancy requirements.

## DO VA APPRAISALS TAKE A LONG TIME?

No. VA appraisals can take anywhere from 5 to 10 days to complete once the process is started by your lender. In some high-sale areas, it may take longer due to the volume of work and the VA appraiser's ability. The VA has instituted a new waterfall appraisal process to support speeding up the process. VA appraisers are authorized to conduct internal only, external only, and/or desktop appraisals in lieu of physical appraisals.

## CAN I ONLY USE MY VA LOAN BENEFIT ONCE?

No. Your VA loan benefit can be used multiple times and is based on the amount of entitlement you have remaining. It is easily possible to own two to three properties using your VA loan benefit. Your lender will be able to review your certificate of eligibility (COE) and advise on how much you can afford without a down payment being required.

## CAN I USE MY VA LOAN BENEFIT IF I HAVE A CO-BORROWER THAT IS NOT MY SPOUSE OR A VETERAN?

Yes, with a non-spouse co-borrower who is not a Veteran, a lender will require a down payment of 12.5% to 14.5%. This is due to the VA guarantees of 25% of the Veteran's loan. Having only one VA-eligible co-borrower on the loan means the lender will only have half of their VA guarantee.

## WHAT IF I AM DENIED A VA LOAN?

If you are denied a VA loan, don't fret. Take a step back and review the reason for denial and make a plan. You may have been denied due to low income, not enough residual income, the property doesn't meet VA standards or other factors. Reach out to our experienced professionals that can help you formulate a plan and timeline to reapply. Don't give up.

## I'D LIKE MY SPECIFIC QUESTION ANSWERED WHO CAN I TALK TO?

If you currently don't have a lender or realtor able to assist, you can search and join our Vetted VA Facebook Group and have your question answered or search the group for other Veterans that have had the same concerns. Our well-moderated group has over 71K members and is stacked with VVA professionals and experts ready to assist, and you can post 'anonymously'.



# VA LOAN FAQs

## CAN I STILL GET PROPERTY IF IT APPRAISED UNDER VALUE?

Yes. You can choose to pay above the appraised value, but the difference above the appraised value is a closing cost and cannot be a part of your VA loan. The difference also cannot be covered by credits and it must come from the Veteran's funds (which can include gift funds).

## CAN I REUSE MY VA LOAN BENEFIT?

Yes. The VA home loan benefit can be reused if you have paid off your prior VA loan and sold the property. In addition, you may apply for a one-time restoration if your prior VA loan has been paid in full and you still own the property. To restore your eligibility your lender will need to send a completed VA Form 26-1880 to your nearest VA Eligibility Center or your lender can apply for this for you.

## WHAT IS DEBT-TO-INCOME RATIO?

Debt-to-income (DTI) ratio is your total monthly debt payments divided by your gross monthly income. VA guidelines do not have DTI limits, but most VA loan officers limit pre-approvals to a DTI of 50%.

## WILL SHOPPING AROUND FOR A LENDER HURT MY CREDIT SCORE?

It depends, multiple credit pulls for a mortgage loan within a 45-day period will only count as a hit against your credit once, typically around a 2-4 point drop. We advise Veterans to seek a reputable mortgage broker who can shop around for the best deal with multiple lenders on one credit pull and can even assist you with some of your basic financial and credit information.

## HOW DO I REFINANCE USING MY VA LOAN?

The VA's Interest Rate Reduction and Refinance loan or "streamline refinance" can be done only if you have already used your eligibility for a VA loan on the property you intended to refinance. For an IRRRL, you need only to certify that you previously occupied it and that the loan cannot exceed the sum of the outstanding balance on the existing VA loan, plus allowable fees and closing costs (including VA funding fee). Contact your vetted lender for more information.

## MY LENDER ISN'T ABLE TO GET MY COE?

If a lender is unable to obtain your COE in WebLGY it doesn't mean that you are ineligible for a VA loan, it means that the system the VA uses does not have sufficient information to make an automatic determination of your eligibility, or your lender does not know how. Your lender should contact the RLC or reach out to the VVA Professional network for assistance.

## MORTGAGE RATES SEEM REALLY HIGH. SHOULD I WAIT TO USE MY VA LOAN BENEFIT?

No. If you are planning to purchase a home using your VA loan, do not let the current interest rates deter you. Interest rates are always going to fluctuate. What you can do is ensure your financial and credit information is the best it can be and work with a vetted mortgage broker that has the ability to shop for the best rate for you. Keep in mind, if rates decrease you can always refinance your VA loan.



# MEET THE VETTED VA LEADERSHIP TEAM



**CHRISTOPHER GRIFFITH**

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER  
USMC VETERAN



**NATHAN KNOTTINGHAM**

CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER



**BRANDI ALONGI**

OPERATIONS MANAGER  
USAF VETERAN



**SHONITA WADE**

VETERAN EDUCATION  
MANAGER  
USAF VETERAN, RETIRED



**NICOLE HOEM**

MORTGAGE EDUCATION  
MANAGER



**KASON MARTIN**

VIDEO EDITOR



**BARBARA MARTIN**

MEDIA MANAGER  
CONTENT CREATOR

## A MESSAGE FROM TEAM VETTED VA

Vetted VA is a community created as an environment where you: a Veteran, Service Member, Family Member, or Professional can ask any question you want about the VA Home Loan process and receive an answer with perfect placement, access, and citing of sources where every interaction helps us all learn and grow. We learn everything in life through Education, Experience, and Exposure. Education comes in the form of questions and answers, textbooks and lectures, and courses. Experience is earned in time and involvement; it requires presence and attention with purposeful action. Exposure is the cumulative impact of Education and Experience over time and in different variables. But through these three mediums we become knowledgeable, earn wisdom, and then have the ability to share that with others.

Community is where we gather, the grouping of individuals choosing to stay engaged with one another to create reciprocal relationships. Community doesn't divide, it binds together through different values, wisdom, and insights all seeking a common purpose: to grow stronger together. Vetted VA is a community built to serve you. Wherever you find yourself on the journey of home ownership utilizing the VA Home Loan Benefit or working to better serve the VA Benefit eligible as a Mortgage or Real Estate Professional you have a community of support with Vetted VA.



## ATLANTA

Jurisdiction: Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina and Tennessee  
Department of Veterans Affairs  
VA Regional Loan Center  
1700 Clairmont Rd  
Decatur, GA 30033-4032  
(Mail: Box 100023, Decatur, GA 300031-7023)

<http://benefits.va.gov/atlanta/>

## CLEVELAND

Jurisdiction: Connecticut, Delaware, Indiana, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island and Vermont  
Department of Veterans Affairs  
VA Regional Loan Center  
1240 East Ninth Street  
Cleveland, OH 44199

<http://benefits.va.gov/cleveland/>

## DENVER

Jurisdiction: Alaska, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming  
Department of Veterans Affairs  
VA Regional Loan Center  
155 VAn Gordan Street  
Lakewood, CO 80228  
(Mail: Box 25126, Denver, CO 80225)

<http://benefits.va.gov/denver/>

## HOUSTON

Jurisdiction: Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma and Texas  
Department of Veterans Affairs  
VA Regional Loan Center  
Houston, TX 77030-4200

<http://benefits.va.gov/houston/>

## PHOENIX

Jurisdiction: American Samoa, Arizona, California, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana, Guam, Hawaii, New Mexico and Nevada  
Department of Veterans Affairs  
VA Regional Loan Center  
3333 N. Central Avenue  
Phoenix, AZ 85012-2402

<http://benefits.va.gov/phoenix/>

## ROANOKE

Jurisdiction: D.C., Kentucky, Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia  
Department of Veterans Affairs  
VA Regional Loan Center  
210 Franklin Road, S.W.  
Roanoke, VA 24011

<http://benefits.va.gov/roanoke/>

## ST. PAUL

Jurisdiction: Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North and South Dakota, Wisconsin  
Department of Veterans Affairs  
VA Regional Loan Center  
1 Federal Drive  
Ft. Snelling  
St. Paul, MN 55111-4050

<http://benefits.va.gov/stpaul/>

## ST. PETERSBURG

Jurisdiction: Alabama, Florida, Mississippi, Puerto Rico, U.S. Virgin Islands  
Department of Veterans Affairs  
VA Regional Loan Center  
9500 Bay Pines Blvd.  
St. Petersburg, FL 33744

<http://benefits.va.gov/stpetersburg/>

# EDUCATION EXPOSURE EXPERIENCE

CHECK OUT OUR TRAINING PLATFORM AT [WWW.LEARN.VETTEDVATRaining.COM](http://WWW.LEARN.VETTEDVATRaining.COM)  
FOR MORE VA LOAN RESOURCES



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